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PRESS RELEASE

**LAUNCH OF THE  
SUPPORT TO FARMERS ORGANIZATIONS IN AFRICA PROGRAM  
(SFOAP)**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; 11th March 2013-**

The Pan-African Farmers Organization (PAFO)<sup>1</sup> today launched the main phase of the SFOAP; a five year program (2013-2017) that is supported through funds from the European Union, IFAD, Swiss Development Agency (SDC) and the *Agence Francaise de Developpement* (AFD) to the tune of 19.9 million euro. The program will support activities of 68 national farmers' organizations in 49 countries.

This program was initially launched as a pilot in 2009 to strengthen the capacities of Farmers' Organizations (FOs) in African countries and their regional and pan-Africa networks. It was the first continental program in Africa to be initiated by four regional networks of Farmer organizations in sub-saharan Africa namely Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF); *Plateforme Sous-Regionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale* (PROPAC) *Reseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (ROPPA) and Southern Africa Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU). The *Union Maghebaine des Agriculteurs* (UMAGRI) is also now part of this new main phase of SFOAP.

The program's main phase aims to strengthen the institutional and organizational capacities of farmer organizations by giving them a better say in Agricultural policies and programs; it will help support the development of FOs economic services to facilitate the integration of small holder farmers in value chains; it will also promote knowledge sharing and learning through shared experiences.

The Program was officially launched by The Presidents & CEOs of the five Regional Farmers' Organizations; a representative from the AUC Mr Khecha Abderrahmane; the Head of the Delegation and Special Representative of the European Union to the African Union, Gary Quince; the IFAD Country Program Manager for Ethiopia - Mr Robinson Mutandi; Mr Ghelew Alexandre from SDC; among other development partners and invited guests.

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<sup>1</sup> PAFO is a network of regional farmer organizations in Africa namely the EAFF, PROPAC, ROPPA, UMAGRI & SACAU in Eastern, Central, West, North and Southern Africa respectively

In his opening statement; the President of PAFO Mr Djibo Bagna welcomed this renewed support from EC; IFAD; SDC and AFD; saying that this support was evidence that development partners want to continue working in Agriculture and that they value their relationship with farmers' organizations and it was thus incumbent on the farmers' organizations to play their rightful role in Agriculture development.

Ambassador Quince reiterated the continued support of the EU towards Agriculture through 'helping countries sustain their economic growth through greater investment in agriculture and particularly through the AU's flagship -Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program - CAADP initiative'. He noted that SFOAP pilot phase had supported improved governance, leadership and financial management which in turn had made the regional farmers' organizations credible counterparts in the eyes of public authorities thus starting to get the voice needed to influence agricultural policy across Africa.

Mr Alexander Ghelew from SDC mentioned that SFOAP has the ambition to bring transformative impacts to African small-scale family farmers for food security and nutrition as well as poverty eradication by putting a declared focus on gender and youth because it has elements of ownership (by the networks), flexibility, uses subsidiarity principles for coordination, it is inclusive, knowledge based and has peer learning components.

On his part; Mr Robson Mutandi mentioned that in the last few years more and more farmers' organizations had received direct support from IFAD with over 80 such organizations having benefitted in the recent past. IFAD shall continue supporting the Farmers' forums to listen to farmers and thus prioritize and guide IFAD support to agriculture programs

Mr Khecha from AUC in welcoming the participants to Ethiopia, said that the program will heavily contribute towards the CAADP agenda; especially now that AUC was celebrating the 10 years of CAADP in Addis Ababa towards the end of March 2013.

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